1;Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
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fective and corrupted! They have scarce left a letter unmutilated. But these writers are excusable, for they have drawn their information from corrupted sources. Without having even entered America, they insert into their journals the words of savage languages, the meaning and pronunciation of which they are totally ignorant of. Hence it is that the American names of places, rivers, trees, plants, and animals, are so wretchedly mutilated in all books, that we can hardly read them without laughter. Spanish children, by constantly conversing with Indians of their own age, imbibe a correct knowledge of the Indian languages, which, to grown-up persons, is a business both of time and labour. I have known adults who, after conversing many years with the Indians, uttered as many errors as syllables. It is difficult for a European to accustom his tongue to the strange and distorted words which the savages pronounce so fast and indistinctly, hissing with their tongues, snoring with their nostrils, grinding with their teeth, and gurgling with their throats; so that you seem to hear the sound of ducks quacking in a pond, rather than the voices of men talking. Learned men had long wished that a person who understood some American language would clearly expound the system, construction, and whole anatomy of it:

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[191] and it is to comply with the desire of these persons that I am going to treat compendiously of the Abiponian language.

194 *192 Most of the Americans want some letter which we Europeans use, and use some which we want. A letter of very frequent occurrence amongst the Abipones, but which we Europeans are unacquainted with, is one which has the mixed sound of R and G. To pronounce it properly, the tongue must be slided a little along the roof of the mouth, and brought towards the throat, in the manner of those persons who have a natural incapacity of pronouncing the letter R. To signify this peculiar letter of the Abipones, we have written R or G indiscriminately, but distinguished by a certain mark, thus: *Laetaŕat*, a son: *Achibiŕaik*, salt. The plural number [193] changes R into K, thus: *Laetkáte*, sons. Europeans find much difficulty in pronouncing this letter, especially if it recur several times in the same word, as in *Raŕegŕanŕaik*, a Vilela Indian. *Rellaŕanŕañ potrôl*, he hunts wild horses. *Laṕiŕatŕaik*, many-coloured. The Abipones can distinguish an European, however well-skilled in every other part of their language, by the pronunciation of this letter.

The Abipones use the ö, which the Paraguayrians write ë with two dots, like the French, Hungarians, and Germans: as *Ahëpegak*, a